

voluntary training is an expression precisely similar to that which, you would use if you said, in speaking of a truant law for the schools, that you believed in universal obligatory attendance at the public schools for every child that did not wish to stay away.

"In connection with the word 'training' the words 'universal voluntary' have exactly the same effect an acid has on an alkali—a neutralizing effect. One of our defects as a nation is a tendency to use what have been called 'weasel words.' When a weasel sucks eggs the meat is sucked out of the egg. If you use a 'weasel word' after another there is nothing left of the other. Now, you can have universal training, or you can have voluntary training, but when you use the word \* 'voluntary' to qualify the word \* 'universal' you are using a 'weasel word'; it has sucked all the meaning out of 'universal.' The two words flatly contradict one another."

It was subsequently shown that Roosevelt got the term "weasel words" from a story by Stewart Chaplin that was published in the *Century Magazine* in June 1900, in which this passage occurred:

"Why, weasel words are words that suck the life out of the words next to them, just as a weasel sucks an egg and leaves the shell. If you heft the egg afterwards it's as light as a feather, and not very filling when you are hungry, but a basketful of them would make quite a show, and would bamboozle the unwary.

"I know them well, and mighty useful they are, too. Al-

though the gentleman couldn't write much of  
a platform,  
he's an expert on weasling. I've seen him  
take Ms pen  
and go through a proposed plank or  
resolution and weasel  
every flat-footed word in it. Then the weasel  
word pleases  
one man, and the word that's been weasled  
pleases an-  
other."

In his universal reading, Roosevelt had  
encountered this  
magazine story and his marvelous memory  
had retained